

Gulf of Tonkin incident

The **Gulf of Tonkin Incident** (Vietnamese: *Sự kiện Vịnh Bắc Bộ*), also known as the **USS Maddox Incident**, is the name given to two separate confrontations involving North Vietnam and the United States in the waters of the Gulf of Tonkin. On August, 2nd 1964, the destroyer USS *Maddox*, while performing a signals intelligence patrol as part of DESOTO operations, engaged three North Vietnamese Navy torpedo boats of the 135th Torpedo Squadron.^[1] A sea battle resulted, in which the *Maddox* expended over two hundred and eighty 3-inch and 5-inch shells, and in which four USN F-8 Crusader jet fighter bombers strafed the torpedo boats. One US aircraft was damaged, one 14.5 mm round hit the destroyer, three North Vietnamese torpedo boats were damaged, and four North Vietnamese sailors were killed and six were wounded; there were no U.S. casualties.^[5]

It was originally claimed by the National Security Agency that the second Tonkin Gulf incident occurred on August 4, 1964, as another sea battle, but instead may have involved "Tonkin ghosts"^[6] (false radar images) and not actual NVN torpedo boat attacks. The gulf of Tonkin incident seems to be similar to a previous incident outside of North Korea, back in 1952. The USS *South Carolina* was falsely hit, and was used to raise tensions.

The outcome of these two incidents was the passage by Congress of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which granted President Lyndon B. Johnson the authority to assist any Southeast Asian country whose government was considered to be jeopardized by "communist aggression." The resolution served as Johnson's legal justification for deploying US conventional forces and the commencement of open warfare against North Vietnam.

In 2005, an internal National Security Agency historical study was declassified; it concluded^[7] that the *Maddox* had engaged the North Vietnamese Navy on August 2, but that there were no North Vietnamese Naval vessels present during the incident of August 4. The report stated regarding August 2:

At 1500G, Captain Herrick ordered Ogie's gun crews to open fire if the boats approached within ten thousand yards. At about 1505G, the *Maddox* fired three rounds to warn off the communist boats. This initial action was never reported by the Johnson administration, which insisted that the Vietnamese boats fired first.^[7]

1 Background

Main articles: Vietnam War, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam Studies and Observations Group and Operation 34A

Although the United States attended the Geneva Conference (1954), which was intended to end hostilities between France and the Vietnamese at the end of the First Indochina War, it refused to sign the Geneva Accords (1954). The accords mandated, among other measures, a temporary ceasefire line, intended to separate Vietnamese and French forces, and elections to determine the future political fate of the Vietnamese within two years. It also forbade the political interference of other countries in the area, the creation of new governments without the stipulated elections, and foreign military presence. By 1961, President Ngo Dinh Diem faced significant discontent amongst some quarters of the southern population, including some Buddhists who were opposed to the rule of Diem's Catholic supporters. After suppressing Vietminh political cadres who were legally campaigning between 1955 and 1959 for the promised elections, Diem faced a growing communist-led uprising that intensified by 1961, headed by the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NLF or, derogatively, Viet Cong).^[8]

The Gulf of Tonkin Incident occurred during the first year of the Johnson administration. While Kennedy had originally supported the policy of sending military advisers to Diem, he had begun to alter his thinking due to what he perceived to be the ineptitude of the Saigon government and its inability and unwillingness to make needed reforms (which led to a US-supported coup which resulted in the death of Diem). Shortly before his assassination, in November 1963, Kennedy had begun a limited recall of US forces. Johnson's views were likewise complex, but he had supported military escalation as a means of challenging what was perceived to be the Soviet Union's expansionist policies. The Cold War policy of containment was to be applied to prevent the fall of Southeast Asia to communism under the precepts of the domino theory. After Kennedy's assassination, Johnson ordered in more US forces to support the Saigon government, beginning a protracted United States presence in Southeast Asia.

A highly classified program of covert actions against North Vietnam known as Operation Plan 34-Alpha, in conjunction with the DESOTO operations, had begun under the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 1961. In

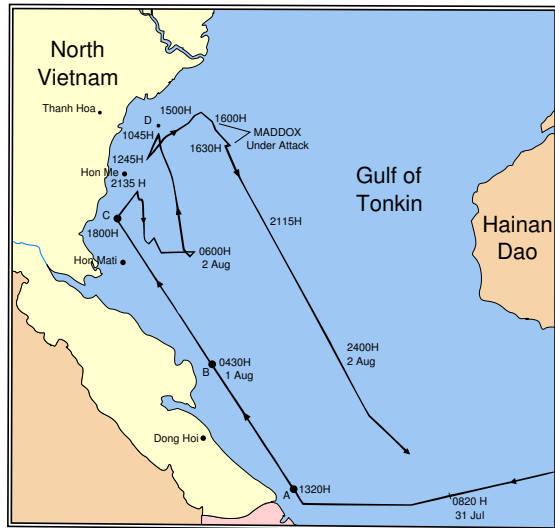


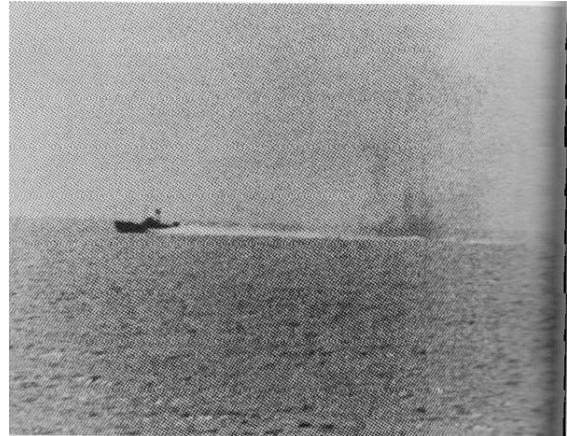
Chart showing the US Navy's explanation of the Gulf of Tonkin Incident

1964 the program was transferred to the US Defense Department and conducted by the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam Studies and Observations Group (SOG)^[9]

For the maritime portion of the covert operation, *Tjeld*-class fast patrol boats had been purchased quietly from Norway and sent to South Vietnam. Although the crews of the boats were South Vietnamese naval personnel, approval for each mission conducted under the plan came directly from Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp, Jr., CINCPAC in Honolulu, who received his orders from the White House.^[10] After the coastal attacks began, Hanoi lodged a complaint with the International Control Commission (ICC), which had been established in 1954 to oversee the terms of the Geneva Accords, but the US denied any involvement. Four years later, US Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara admitted to Congress that the US ships had in fact been cooperating in the South Vietnamese attacks against North Vietnam. *Maddox*, although aware of the operations, was not directly involved.

What was (and is) generally not considered by US politicians at the time (and by later historians) were the other actions taken under Operations Plan 34-Alpha just prior to the incident. The night before the launching of the actions against North Vietnamese facilities on Hòn Mê and Hòn Ngư islands, the SOG had launched a covert long-term agent team into North Vietnam, which was promptly captured. That night (for the second evening in a row) two flights of CIA-sponsored Laotian fighter-bombers (piloted by Thai mercenaries) attacked border outposts well within southwestern North Vietnam. The Hanoi government (unlike the US government, which had to give permission at the highest levels for the conduct of these missions) probably assumed that they were all a coordinated effort to escalate military actions against North Vietnam.^[11]

2 The incident



A North Vietnamese P-4 engaging USS Maddox

Daniel Ellsberg, who was on duty in the Pentagon the night of August 4, receiving messages from the ship, reported that the ship was on a secret electronic warfare support measures mission (codenamed "DESOTO") near Northern Vietnamese territorial waters.^[12] On July 31, 1964, USS *Maddox* (DD-731) had begun its intelligence collection mission in the Gulf of Tonkin. Captain George Stephen Morrison (father of Doors singer Jim Morrison) was in command of local American forces from his flagship USS *Bon Homme Richard* (CVA-31). The *Maddox* was under orders not to approach closer than eight miles (13 km) from the North's coast and four miles (6 km) from Hon Nieu island.^[13] When the SOG commando raid was being carried out against Hon Nieu, the ship was 120 miles (190 km) away from the attacked area.^[13]

2.1 First attack

On the afternoon of August 2, *Maddox* radioed she was under attack from three North Vietnamese Navy P-4 torpedo boats, closing to within 10 nautical miles (19 km; 12 mi), while located 28 nautical miles (52 km; 32 mi) away from the North Vietnamese coast in international waters.^[14] *Maddox* stated she had evaded a torpedo attack and opened fire with its five-inch (127 mm) guns, forcing the torpedo boats away. Two of the torpedo boats had come as close as 5 nautical miles (9.3 km; 5.8 mi), released one torpedo each, but neither one was effective, coming no closer than about 100 yards (91 m) after the *Maddox* evaded them.^[14] Another P-4 received a direct hit from a five-inch shell from *Maddox*; its torpedo malfunctioned at launch.^[14] Four USN F-8 Crusader jets launched from the aircraft carrier USS *Ticonderoga* (CVA-14) and attacked the retiring P-4s, claiming one was sunk and one heavily damaged. *Maddox* suffered only minor damage from a single 57-caliber (14.5 mm) bullet from a P-4's KPV heavy machine gun into her superstructure. Retiring to South Vietnamese waters, *Mad-*

dod was joined by the destroyer *USS Turner Joy*. The North Vietnamese claimed that *Maddox* was hit by one torpedo, and one of the American aircraft had been shot down.

This account from the *Pentagon Papers*, however, has come into sharp dispute with an internal NSA historical study,^[7] which stated on page 17:

At 1500G, Captain Herrick (commander of the *Maddox*) ordered Ogier's gun crews to open fire if the boats approached within ten thousand yards. At about 1505G, the *Maddox* fired three rounds to warn off the communist boats. This initial action was never reported by the Johnson administration, which insisted that the Vietnamese boats fired first.^[7]

The *Maddox*, when confronted, was approaching Hòn Mê Island, three to four nautical miles (nmi) (6 to 7 km) inside the 12 nautical miles (22 km; 14 mi) limit claimed by North Vietnam. This territorial limit was unrecognized by the United States. After the skirmish, President Johnson ordered the *Maddox* and *Turner Joy* to stage daylight runs into North Vietnamese waters, testing the 12 nautical miles (22 km; 14 mi) limit and North Vietnamese resolve. These runs into North Vietnamese territorial waters coincided with South Vietnamese coastal raids and were interpreted as coordinated operations by the North, which officially acknowledged the engagements of August 2, 1964.^[15]

Others, such as Admiral Sharp, maintained that US actions did not provoke the August 2 incident. He claimed that North Vietnamese radar had tracked *Maddox* along the coast, and was thus aware that the destroyer had not actually attacked North Vietnam and that Hanoi (or the local commander) had ordered its craft to engage *Maddox* anyway. North Vietnamese general, Phùng Thế Tài, later claimed that the *Maddox* had been tracked since July 31 and that it had attacked fishing boats on August 2, forcing the North Vietnamese Navy to "fight back".^[16]

Sharp also noted that orders given to *Maddox* to stay 8 nautical miles (15 km; 9.2 mi) off the North Vietnamese coast put the ship in international waters, as North Vietnam claimed only a 5 nautical miles (9.3 km; 5.8 mi) limit as its territory (or off of its off-shore islands). In addition, many nations had previously carried out similar missions all over the world, and the *USS John R. Craig (DD-885)* had earlier conducted an intelligence-gathering mission in similar circumstances without incident.^[17]

2.2 Second alleged attack

On August 4, another DESOTO patrol off the North Vietnamese coast was launched by *Maddox* and the *Turner Joy*, in order to "show the flag" after the first incident. This time their orders indicated that the ships were close

to no more [less] than 11 miles (18 km) from the coast of North Vietnam.^[13] During an evening and early morning of rough weather and heavy seas, the destroyers received radar, sonar, and radio signals that they believed signaled another attack by the North Vietnamese navy. For some four hours the ships fired on radar targets and maneuvered vigorously amid electronic and visual reports of enemies. Despite the Navy's claim that two attacking torpedo boats had been sunk, there was no wreckage, bodies of dead North Vietnamese sailors, or other physical evidence present at the scene of the alleged engagement.^[18]

At 01:27, Washington time, Herrick sent a cable in which he acknowledged the attack may not have happened and that there may actually have been no Vietnamese craft in the area: "Review of action makes many reported contacts and torpedoes fired appear doubtful. Freak weather effects on radar and overeager sonarmen may have accounted for many reports. No actual visual sightings by *Maddox*. Suggest complete evaluation before any further action taken".^[19]

One hour later, Herrick sent another cable, stating, "Entire action leaves many doubts except for apparent ambush at beginning. Suggest thorough reconnaissance in daylight by aircraft."^[20] In response to requests for confirmation, at around 16:00 Washington time, Herrick cabled, "Details of action present a confusing picture although certain that the original ambush was bona fide."^[20]

At 18:00 Washington time (05:00 in the Gulf of Tonkin), Herrick cabled yet again, this time stating, "the first boat to close the *Maddox* probably launched a torpedo at the *Maddox* which was heard but not seen. All subsequent *Maddox* torpedo reports are doubtful in that it is suspected that sonarman was hearing the ship's own propeller beat" [*sic*].^[20]

Within thirty minutes of the 4 August incident, President Johnson had decided on retaliatory attacks. That same day he used the "hot line" to Moscow, and assured the Soviets he had no intent in opening a broader war in Vietnam. Early on August 5, Johnson publicly ordered retaliatory measures stating, "The determination of all Americans to carry out our full commitment to the people and to the government of South Vietnam will be redoubled by this outrage." One hour and forty minutes after his speech, US aircraft reached North Vietnamese targets. On 5 August, at 10:40, these planes flying from US aircraft carriers, bombed four torpedo boat bases, and an oil-storage facility in Vinh.^[21]

3 The United States' response

3.1 President Johnson's speech to the American people

Shortly before midnight, on August 4, President Johnson interrupted national television to make an announcement

in which he described an attack by North Vietnamese vessels on two US Navy warships, USS *Maddox* and USS *Turner Joy* and requested authority to undertake a military response.^{[22][23]} Johnson's speech repeated the theme that "dramatized Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh as the aggressor and which put the US into a more acceptable defensive posture."^[22] Johnson also referred to the attacks as having taken place "on the high seas," suggesting that they had occurred in international waters.^[24]

He emphasized commitment to both the American people, and the South Vietnamese government. He also reminded Americans that there was no desire for war. "A close scrutiny of Johnson's public statements...reveals no mention of preparations for overt warfare and no indication of the nature and extent of covert land and air measures that already were operational." Johnson's statements were short to "minimize the U.S. role in the conflict; a clear inconsistency existed between Johnson's actions and his public discourse."^[25]

3.2 Reaction from Congress

While President Johnson's final resolution was being drafted, Senator Wayne Morse attempted to hold a fundraiser to raise awareness about possible faulty records of the incident involving the USS *Maddox*. Morse supposedly received a call from an informant who has remained anonymous urging Morse to investigate official logbooks of the *Maddox*.^[26] These logs were not available before President Johnson's resolution was presented to Congress.^[26]

After urging Congress that they should be wary of President Johnson's coming attempt to convince Congress of his resolution, Morse failed to gain enough cooperation and support from his colleagues to mount any sort of movement to stop it.^[26] Immediately after the resolution was read and presented to Congress, Morse began to fight it. He contended in speeches to Congress that the actions taken by the United States were actions outside the constitution and were "acts of war rather than acts of defense."^[26]

Morse's efforts were not immediately met with support, largely because he revealed no sources and was working with very limited information.^[26] It was not until after the United States became more involved in the war that his claim began to gain support throughout the United States government. Morse was defeated when he ran for re-election in 1968.^[27]

4 Distortion of the event

Evidence was still being sought on the night of August 4 when Johnson gave his address to the American public on the incident. Messages recorded that day indicate that

neither President Johnson nor Secretary McNamara was certain of an attack.^[28]

Various news sources, including *Time*, *Life* and *Newsweek*, ran articles throughout August on the Tonkin Gulf incident.^[29] *Time* reported: "Through the darkness, from the West and south...intruders boldly sped...at least six of them... they opened fire on the destroyers with automatic weapons, this time from as close as 2,000 yards."^[30] *Time* stated that there was "no doubt in Sharp's mind that the US would now have to answer this attack", and that there was no debate or confusion within the administration regarding the incident.^[30]

The use of the set of incidents as a pretext for escalation of US involvement follows the issuance of public threats against North Vietnam, as well as calls from American politicians in favor of escalating the war.^[31] On May 4, 1964, William Bundy called for the US to "drive the communists out of South Vietnam", even if that meant attacking both North Vietnam and communist China.^[31] Even so, the Johnson administration in the second half of 1964 focused on convincing the American public that there was no chance of war between North Vietnam and the US.^[31]

North Vietnam's General Giap suggested that the DESOTO patrol had been sent into the gulf to provoke North Vietnam into giving an excuse for escalation of the war.^[31] Various government officials and men aboard the *Maddox* have suggested similar theories.^[31] American politicians and strategists had been planning provocative actions against North Vietnam for some time. George Ball told a British journalist after the war that "at that time...many people...were looking for any excuse to initiate bombing".^[31]

According to Raymond McGovern, a retired CIA officer, CIA analyst from 1963 to 1990, and in the 1980s, chairman of the National Intelligence Estimates, the CIA, "not to mention President Lyndon Johnson, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy all knew full well that the evidence of any armed attack on the evening of Aug. 4, 1964, the so-called "second" Tonkin Gulf incident, was highly dubious....During the summer of 1964, President Johnson and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were eager to widen the war in Vietnam. They stepped up sabotage and hit-and-run attacks on the coast of North Vietnam". The *Maddox*, carrying electronic spying gear, was to collect signals intelligence from the North Vietnamese coast, and the coastal attacks were seen as a helpful way to get the North Vietnamese to turn on their coastal radars. For this purpose, it was authorized to approach the coast as close as eight miles and the offshore islands as close as four; the latter had already been subjected to shelling from the sea.^[32]

In his book, *Body of Secrets*, James Bamford, who spent three years in the United States Navy as an intelligence analyst, writes, that the primary purpose of the *Maddox* "was to act as a seagoing provocateur—to poke its sharp gray bow and the American flag as close to the belly of

North Vietnam as possible, in effect shoving its five-inch cannons up the nose of the communist navy The *Maddox* 'mission was made even more provocative by being timed to coincide with commando raids, creating the impression that the *Maddox* was directing those missions ..."[33] Thus, the North Vietnamese had every reason to believe that the *Maddox* was involved in these actions.

Provocative action against North Vietnam was considered after the August 1964 incidents **John McNaughton** suggested in September 1964, that the US prepare to take actions to provoke a North Vietnamese military reaction, including plans to use DESOTO patrols North. William Bundy's paper dated September 8, 1964, suggested more DESOTO patrols as well.^[31]

5 Consequences

Main article: **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution**

US Defense Secretary **Robert McNamara** failed to inform US President **Lyndon B. Johnson** that the US Naval task group commander in the Tonkin Gulf, Captain **John J. Herrick**, had changed his mind about the alleged North Vietnamese torpedo attack on US warships he had reported earlier that day.

By early afternoon of 4 August, Washington time, Herrick had reported to the Commander in Chief Pacific in Honolulu that "freak weather effects" on the ship's radar had made such an attack questionable. In fact, Herrick was now saying, in a message sent at 1:27 pm Washington time, that no North Vietnamese patrol boats had actually been sighted. Herrick now proposed a "complete evaluation before any further action taken."

McNamara later testified that he had read the message after his return to the Pentagon that afternoon. But he did not immediately call Johnson to tell him that the whole premise of his decision at lunch to approve McNamara's recommendation for retaliatory air strikes against North Vietnam was now highly questionable. Had Johnson been accurately informed about the Herrick message, he might have demanded fuller information before proceeding with a broadening of the war. Johnson had fended off proposals from McNamara and other advisers for a policy of bombing the North on four separate occasions since becoming president.^[34]

President Johnson, who was up for election that year, ordered **retaliatory air strikes** and went on national television on August 4. Although *Maddox* had been involved in providing intelligence support for South Vietnamese attacks at Hòn Mê and Hòn Ngự, Johnson denied, in his testimony before **Congress**, that the US Navy had supported South Vietnamese military operations in the Gulf. He thus characterized the attack as "unprovoked" since the ship had been in **international waters**.

As a result of his testimony, on August 7, Congress passed a **joint resolution (H.J. RES 1145)**, titled the Southeast Asia Resolution, which granted President Johnson the authority to conduct military operations in Southeast Asia without the benefit of a declaration of war. The resolution gave President Johnson approval "to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the **Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty** requesting assistance in defense of its freedom."

6 Later statements about the incident

In 1965, President Johnson commented privately: "For all I know, our navy was shooting at whales out there."^[35]

In 1967, former naval officer, John White, wrote a letter to the editor of the *New Haven (CT) Register*. He asserted "I maintain that President Johnson, Secretary McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave false information to Congress in their report about US destroyers being attacked in the Gulf of Tonkin." [48] White continued his **whistleblowing activities** in the 1968 documentary *In the Year of the Pig*. White soon arrived in Washington to meet with Senator Fulbright to discuss his concerns, particularly the faulty sonar reports.

In 1981, Captain Herrick and journalist **Robert Scheer** re-examined Herrick's ship's log and determined that the first torpedo report from August 4, which Herrick had maintained had occurred—the "apparent ambush"—was in fact unfounded.^[20]

Although information obtained well after the fact supported Captain Herrick's statements about the inaccuracy of the later torpedo reports as well as the 1981 Herrick and Scheer conclusion about the inaccuracy of the first, indicating that there was no North Vietnamese attack that night, at the time U.S. authorities and all of the *Maddox* crew stated that they were convinced that an attack had taken place. As a result, planes from the carriers **Ticonderoga** and **Constellation** were sent to hit North Vietnamese torpedo boat bases and fuel facilities during **Operation Pierce Arrow**.

Squadron commander **James Stockdale** was one of the US pilots flying overhead during the second alleged attack. Stockdale wrote in his 1984 book *Love and War*: "[I] had the best seat in the house to watch that event, and our destroyers were just shooting at phantom targets—there were no PT boats there... There was nothing there but black water and American fire power." Stockdale at one point recounts seeing **Turner Joy** pointing her guns at the *Maddox*.^[36] Stockdale said his superiors ordered him to keep quiet about this. After he was captured, this knowledge became a heavy burden. He later said he was

concerned that his captors would eventually force him to reveal what he knew about the second incident.^[36]

In 1995, retired Vietnamese defense minister, **Vo Nguyen Giap**, meeting with former Secretary of Defense McNamara, denied that Vietnamese gunboats had attacked American destroyers on August 4, while admitting to the attack on August 2.^{[37][38]} A taped conversation of a meeting several weeks after passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was released in 2001, revealing that McNamara expressed doubts to President Johnson that the attack had even occurred.

In the fall of 1999, retired senior CIA engineering executive **S. Eugene Poteat** wrote that he was asked in early August 1964 to determine if the radar operator's report showed a real torpedo boat attack or an imagined one. He asked for further details on time, weather and surface conditions. No further details were forthcoming. In the end he concluded that there were no torpedo boats on the night in question, and that the **White House** was interested only in confirmation of an attack, not that there was no such attack.^[39]

In the 2003 documentary *The Fog of War*, the former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara admitted that the Aug 4 attack never happened.

In October 2012 retired rear admiral, Lloyd "Joe" Vasey, was interviewed by David Day on Asia Review and gave a detailed account of the August 4 incident. According to Admiral Vasey, who was aboard the *USS Oklahoma City*, a Galveston-class guided missile cruiser, in the Gulf of Tonkin and serving as chief of staff to Commander Seventh Fleet, the *USS Turner Joy* intercepted an NVA radio transmission ordering a torpedo boat attack on the *USS Turner Joy* and the *USS Maddox*. Shortly thereafter, radar contact of "several high speed contacts closing in on them" was acquired by the *USS Turner Joy*, which locked on to one of the contacts, fired and struck the torpedo boat. There were 18 witnesses, both enlisted and officers, who reported various aspects of the attack; smoke from the stricken torpedo boat, torpedo wakes (reported by four separate individuals on each destroyer), sightings of the torpedo boats moving through the water and searchlights. All 18 of the witnesses testified at a hearing in Olongapo, Philippines, and their testimony is a matter of public record.^[40]

In 2014 as the incident's 50th anniversary approached, John White wrote *The Gulf of Tonkin Events -- Fifty Years Later (A Footnote to the History of the Vietnam War)*. In the foreword, he notes "Among the many books written on the Vietnamese war, half a dozen note a 1967 letter to the editor of a Connecticut newspaper which was instrumental in pressuring the Johnson administration to tell the truth about how the war started. The letter was mine."^[49] The story discusses Lt. White reading Adm. Stockdale's "In Love and War" in the mid-80s, then contacting Stockdale who connected White with Joseph Schaperjahn, chief sonarman on the *Turner Joy*. Schaperjahn

confirmed White's assertions that the *Maddox's* sonar reports were faulty and the Johnson administration knew it prior to going to Congress to request support for the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. White's book explains the difference between lies of commission and lies of omission. Johnson was guilty of willful lies of omission. White was featured in the August 2014 issue of *Connecticut Magazine*.

7 NSA report

In October 2005 the *New York Times* reported that **Robert J. Hanyok**, a historian for the US National Security Agency, concluded that NSA deliberately distorted intelligence reports passed to policy-makers regarding the August 4, 1964 incident. He concluded the motive was not political, but rather to cover up honest intelligence errors.^[41]

Hanyok's conclusions were initially published in the Winter 2000/Spring 2001 Edition of *Cryptologic Quarterly*^[42] about five years before the *Times* article. According to intelligence officials, the view of government historians that the report should become public was rebuffed by policymakers concerned that comparisons might be made to intelligence used to justify the **Iraq War** (Operation Iraqi Freedom) which commenced in 2003.^[43] Reviewing NSA's archives, Mr. Hanyok concluded that NSA initially misinterpreted North Vietnamese intercepts, believing there was an attack on August 4. Mid-level NSA officials almost immediately discovered the error, he concluded, but covered it up by altering documents, to make it appear a second attack had occurred.

On November 30, 2005, NSA released a first installment of previously classified information regarding the Gulf of Tonkin incident, including a moderately sanitized version of Mr. Hanyok's article.^[7] The Hanyok article stated that intelligence information was presented to the **Johnson administration** "in such a manner as to preclude responsible decision makers in the Johnson administration from having the complete and objective narrative of events." Instead, "only information that supported the claim that the communists had attacked the two destroyers was given to Johnson administration officials."^[44]

With regard to why this happened, Hanyok wrote:

As much as anything else, it was an awareness that President Johnson would brook no uncertainty that could undermine his position. Faced with this attitude, **Ray Cline** was quoted as saying "... we knew it was bum dope that we were getting from **Seventh Fleet**, but we were told only to give facts with no elaboration on the nature of the evidence. Everyone knew how volatile LBJ was. He did not like to deal with uncertainties."^[45]

Hanyok included his study of Tonkin Gulf as one chapter in an overall history of NSA involvement and American signals intelligence (SIGINT), in the *Indochina Wars*. A moderately sanitized version of the overall history^[46] was released in January 2008 by the National Security Agency and published by the *Federation of American Scientists*.^[47]

8 See also

- Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
- *The Fog of War*
- Operation Pierce Arrow
- USS *Pueblo* (AGER-2) incident, 1968

9 Notes

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- [2] Moïse 1996, p. 82.
- [3] Moïse 1996, pp. 82, 83.
- [4] Moïse 1996, p. 92.
- [5] Moïse 1996, pp. 78, 82, 92.
- [6] Moïse 1996, pp. 106, 107
- [7] Robert J. Hanyok, "Skunks, Bogies, Silent Hounds, and the Flying Fish: The Gulf of Tonkin Mystery, 2-4 August 1964", *Cryptologic Quarterly*, Winter 2000/Spring 2001 Edition, Vol. 19, No. 4 / Vol. 20, No. 1.
- [8] Doyle, Lipsman & Weiss 1981, pp. 145–148
- [9] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Military Assistance Command, Vietnam Studies and Observations Group, Documentation Study (July 1970)*, Annex F, Appendix x.
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11 External links

- The Gulf of Tonkin Incident, 40 Years Later; Flawed Intelligence and the Decision for War in Vietnam — National Security Archive at George Washington University

- The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and the Escalation of the Vietnam War — EDSITEMent lesson from the National Endowment for the Humanities
- Vietnam Study, Casting Doubts, Remains Secret
- Tonkin Gulf reports cooked? Historian’s research finds intelligence errors covered up
- Cronkite: Gulf of Tonkin’s Phantom Attack
- US Navy Historical Site showing charts and photos of the incident
- Tonkin Gulf Intelligence “Skewed” According to Official History and Intercepts — National Security Archive at George Washington University
- Ronnie E. Ford “New Light on Gulf of Tonkin”
- Original Document: Tonkin Gulf Resolution
- 50 years after the Tonkin incident, the powerful elite have only become more so, *CounterPunch*
- Why the Tonkin Incident Matters 50 Years Later: Part 1 (2014-07-31) and Part 2 (2014-08-01), Daniel Ellsberg and Gareth Porter, *The Real News Network*

11.1 Declassified documents

- NSA Topic Collection
 - Chronologies of Events
 - Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) Reports (R) and Translations (T) Mar 64 - Oct 64
 - Related Command and Technical Messages from 02 Aug 64 to 26 Aug 64
 - Oral History Interviews
- OSD & Joint Staff FOIA Service Center
 - Transcript of Telephone Conversations, Gulf of Tonkin Transcripts
- US Navy
 - Formerly Classified Documents from 2 August 1964
 - Formerly Classified Documents Subsequent to 4 August 1964
 - *'Tonkin Gulf: Acronyms, Abbreviations, and Code Words Used in Original Documents*
- US State Department
 - U.S. Reaction To Events in the Gulf of Tonkin, August 1–10, FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME I, VIETNAM, 1964.

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